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The Snail Darter and the Dam

12-7-1971

Letter from Governor Winfield Dunn of Tennessee to Aubrey J. Wagner, Chairman of the Board, Tennessee Valley Authority

Winfield Dunn
Governor of Tennessee

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF TENNESSEE,

December 7, 1971.

To: Mr. AUBREY J. WAGNER, *Chairman, Board of Directors, Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville, Tenn.*

DEAR MR. WAGNER:

For some months now, my staff has been working with personnel of the Tennessee Valley Authority in reviewing the implications of the Tellico Dam project in East Tennessee. From this inquiry I have concluded that the interests of the State would be best served if TVA were to discontinue plans to impound the Little Tennessee River.

The area around this river enjoys a strategic location. Its proximity to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and to the Cherokee National Forest confers upon it a truly exceptional tourism potential. The Little Tennessee itself is known as one of the Eastern United States' finest stocked trout streams; as such it is a rare and valuable recreational resource. The entire river environment displays unusually fine scenic qualities, an attraction which is becoming ever more difficult to find as more of the nation's rivers are impounded. The lands which would be inundated by the Tellico Lake contain numerous sites of historical and archeological interest, and the proposed reservoir would bury a great acreage of attractive and productive cropland, pasturage, and woodland.

Considering the bounty of reservoirs in the immediate area and the diverse recreational opportunity which they provide, I feel that the impoundment of the Little Tennessee would reduce, rather than expand, recreational opportunities in Tennessee.

For all these reasons, it is my opinion that the Little Tennessee could best serve Tennesseans as the focal point for a scenic river recreational gateway to the national wilderness lands beyond. As a first step toward that end, I will propose both to our General Assembly and to our Congressional delegation that the Little Tennessee be given protective designation under The Tennessee Scenic Rivers Act and the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

I urge that you bring these considerations before the Board of Directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority at your earliest opportunity. I am well aware of the time, effort, and public monies already invested in the project; it is my hope that much of that can be reclaimed or turned to other productive uses. There is much to be done in the way of assisting the river area in reaching its full recreational potential-as a floating, canoeing and trout fishing river; and as a camping, hiking, and nature study area. After reconsidering the possibilities that I have outlined, I hope that you will join this Administration in the conclusion that the Little Tennessee as it now exists is a waterway too valuable for the State of Tennessee to sacrifice.

Yours truly,

WINFIELD DUNN

Governor

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